

## **Appendix C**

Qualitative Research Regarding Work and Family, Focus Group Research with State Employees For the work and Family Advisory Committee, David Binder Research, August 2000.

---

# **Qualitative Research Regarding Work & Family**

---

**Focus Group Research with State Employees  
For the Work & Family Advisory Committee**

David Binder Research  
August 2000

# Table of Contents

---

Introduction and Methodology .....	1
I. GENERAL OPINIONS ON CARING FOR A FAMILY.....	2
II. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JOB & FAMILY .....	5
Positive Aspects of Job toward Caring for a Family .....	5
Negative Aspects of Job toward Caring for a Family.....	6
Changes in the Workplace Regarding Work & Family .....	7
III. EMPLOYER POLICY TOWARD FAMILIES.....	10
Supportiveness of Direct Management .....	10
Supportiveness of the State Government as an Employer .....	11
Evaluation of Specific Programs & Policies .....	13
Suggested Improvements Regarding Work & Family .....	16
IV. BENEFITS PACKAGE .....	20
V. CARE FOR DEPENDENT FAMILY MEMBERS.....	22
VI. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN RANK & FILE AND MANAGERS/ SUPERVISORS.....	24
Staffing.....	24
Abuse of Family-Friendly Policies.....	25
Suggested Culture Shift.....	26
Additional Suggestions for the Workplace .....	27
VII. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN WORK & FAMILY.....	29
APPENDIX: SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS	
Final Discussion Guide	
Examples of Discussion Worksheet	

# Introduction & Methodology

---

This report reviews the results of qualitative research conducted by David Binder Research (“DBR”) on behalf of the Work & Family Advisory Committee (“Committee”). As part of the Committee’s task of identifying, recommending, and advocating family-friendly work policies and programs to support California State employees, DBR was commissioned to conduct several focus groups with State employees to collect their own experiences and opinions on these issues.

Eighteen focus groups were held for this project throughout California during July and August 2000. Locations for these groups included:

- Blythe
- Crescent City
- Fresno
- Irvine
- Los Angeles
- Monterey
- Redding
- Riverside
- Sacramento
- San Diego
- San Luis Obispo
- San Francisco
- Sonoma

Discussion group participants were selected randomly and contacted by the Department of Personnel Administration. Thirteen of these groups involved “rank and file” State employees, while five groups involved State employees who are in manager or supervisor positions. David Binder, Principal of DBR, or Wade Crowfoot, Project Director, both professional focus group moderators facilitated all groups. .

In order to conduct these focus groups, a detailed discussion guide was created by DBR through an iterative process involving Committee members. This discussion guide was used to ensure that all groups were probed on similar issues. However, due to the inductive and exploratory nature of focus groups, the pattern of conversation varied among the groups. The discussion guide utilized in the focus groups is presented as an appendix to this report, as well as the worksheet that participants completed. Also, verbatim written transcripts from all 18 groups are available from DBR, which provides a rich tapestry of perspectives from State employees on the issues of work and family.

The remainder of this report presents findings in roughly the same chronological order that issues were addressed in the focus groups. Verbatim quotes from the focus groups are presented throughout the document to provide texture to the research findings.

## I. General Opinions on Caring for a Family

---

Employees of the State of California define their families in a variety of ways. Almost everyone agrees that immediate family members with whom one lives (including parents, children and siblings) constitute an individual's family. Many individuals also identify extended family members who live outside of their area as important members of their family, particularly elderly parents who often require care.

Many state employees also suggest that their definition of family includes individuals that "a person cares about," such as housemates who are not biological family members or simply people to whom a person is close. In particular, some state employees even include many of their coworkers in their definition of family members.

*"To me, it's not just my relatives... I live in a home now with a blood relative son, but we've enveloped and embraced a friend of his who is down here going to San Diego State, and her folks are up in San Luis Obispo. So, to me the family unit has changed a whole lot. It used to be Mom, Dad and the kids. Now it can be Mom, Dad, grandma, grandpa, whoever, or even an unrelated person. So 'family' has a bigger meaning now." (Rank & File)*

*"Because I've been with the department for 15 years, my family is my family at work because we're all very close. Our office is real close." ((Rank & File)*

Most State employees agree that it has become increasingly more difficult to care for a family in our society over the past several years. This finding corresponds closely to other qualitative research that DBR has conducted throughout California in the past decade. Group participants identify a litany of challenges that they face in caring for their families:

- Increasing time constraints with family members. Many individuals report that they "struggle to juggle" family responsibilities and work demands.

*"I come from Corrections and sometimes it can be very demanding and that's where it gets real tense. You have to worry about picking your youngest kid up from daycare and sometimes you can't make it. Sometimes we have to stay a little bit longer. Sometimes the job is just real demanding." (Rank & File, San Diego)*  
*"I think time is an issue. Most people that I work with have several children and if it's a traditional family, most everybody is working to cover costs and everything. The wife is working, the husband is working. The time off that they do have to spend is running around and they don't really have a lot of time with family." (Rank & File)*

- Increased cost of living: Most participants feel that it has become increasingly expensive to care for a family due to cost increases in general living expenses such as real estate, as well as increased costs related to family needs—such as children's daycare.

*"I think daycare is becoming a bigger issue. When my son was small, daycare was relatively cheap and you had a lot of options if you didn't have steady work. Now it seems like the daycare business has become a business and I think... it makes it a lot more difficult." (Rank & File)*

- Necessity for both parents or single parent to hold full-time employment: Many participants report that in most two-parent families, both parents must hold full time jobs in order to survive financially or that in a single parent household, that parent must work fulltime. As a result of this work schedule, many suggest that it has become difficult to spend time with children and elderly family members, and to keep the family together as a cohesive unit.

*"Society has changed so much now that the mother is out of the house... I feel really bad for today's mother who has to leave the home-- a single parent or one with a partner. Because the damage it does... Right now, the young mother that is out there is under a lot of stress, a lot of pressure. So since the mother is no longer at home, you do have these responsible parents that want to know 'where are you, what time did you get home?' My coworkers, it's like they're looking at the clock, 'Well, God, it's 3:30, it's 3:15, why hasn't she called?' And I don't blame them." (Rank & File)*

- An increasingly powerful set of negative influences with which children and youth are faced: Several state employees who have children suggest that their children are confronted with a growing range of influences that are potentially harmful, such as violence and drugs. These parents suggest that it is increasingly difficult to keep their kids "on the right track."

*(I've noticed) an increase in the teen violence and a lot of problems in the schools. I hear more and more about attention deficit disorders and things that weren't named in the past that are being named now and really seeing a lot of problems with these younger kids that in my opinion should be caught when they're younger and it's hard to do that when you have full-time working parents." ((Rank & File)*

- Expectations of activities for children: Parents in the discussion groups also report that it is difficult to manage the numerous activities in which they feel their children are expected to participate.

*"I think there's a lot more pressure on younger kids to participate in a lot of after-school things. I think when my kids were young it was mandatory with homework and so when you come home from work you're tired and then you have to help them with the homework... They each have a sporting event or something they have to go to practice to, or something with their friends. It pulls you in a lot of ways." (Rank & File)*

- Increasing responsibility that adults have for their parents. Many participants are also realizing the grave responsibility that comes with caring for elderly family members, particularly parents. Several of these individuals are realizing the difficulty of providing care for these family members.

*"I'm in the situation where my Mom is over 60. She still works but she just had surgery on her hand, so I had to take a few days off to be with her, to help her adjust her medications. I take days off or time off to take her to her doctor's appointments. She has Kaiser, so you have to wait around a lot of the time. So, that's my situation. Whenever something happens to her, I have to take time off." (Rank & File)*

## II. Relationship between Job & Family

---

State employees hold a wide variety of opinions regarding how well their employment fits into caring for their family. While some participants report that their jobs work quite well for caring for their family, others feel that their jobs make it quite difficult to care for a family. The vast majority of group participants agree on which components or aspects of a job make it “family-friendly.” The difference that emerges among employees is that some feel that these variables exist in their jobs, while others suggest that such variables are absent.

Clearly, the variable that most defines the overall opinion of State employees on whether their jobs are “family-friendly” is on-site management. Those employees who are positive toward their direct management tend to perceive their job as supportive towards their role as family caretaker, while those with negative views toward their management feel their jobs are non-supportive in this respect.

*“I think a lot of the time it boils down to who your supervisor is in your office. Because I know in my agency, we have a very good office in Riverside, but if you want to go to Santa Ana there’s different supervisors there and they lose staff constantly because they’re not flexible. Whereas my supervisors are pretty flexible. If I need time off and I didn’t warn them ahead of time but if something comes up—it’s okay, and I think that has a lot to do with retaining staff and keeping your staff happy.” (Rank & File)*

### **Positive Aspects of Job towards Caring for a Family**

Group participants who are positive toward their jobs regarding family-friendliness list several aspects of their jobs that help them to care for their families:

- **Compassionate and understanding management:** Virtually all of participants who feel their job works well in caring for their family report that their direct manager or supervisor understands the importance of their families and is supportive of their need to care for their family. In fact, most participants who are positive toward their jobs agree that this is the primary reason why their jobs are so family-friendly.

*“I’m only clerical support... and my sergeant is absolutely like my best friend and he understands when I call in and say something is going on, I have to take care of a family issue. When my mother passed away there was a huge amount of court time because my sister contested the will, and he was wonderful about allowing me to work on Saturdays.” (Rank & File)*

*“I know in my instance now, my administration has been really good. I went to them and said these are the dynamics I’m dealing with, with my mother and she’s now my priority, and there may be times I have to go. They’ve been really good working through that with me.” (Rank & File)*

*“I can take time off anytime I want. I mean all I have to do is just call my boss at home, on his pager, cell phone, or whatever, and just say I need time off. And he’ll give it to me. He’ll say you*



*take care of whatever you need to take care of and when you get that handled then you come back.” (Rank & File)*

- Flexibility in scheduling. State employees who currently utilize non-traditional scheduling patterns (such as “4/40s” and “9/80s”) report that these scheduling scenarios greatly enhance their ability to care for their families. Even those employees who are not on such scheduling suggest that their management’s flexibility to occasionally modify their schedules so that they can meet family needs is extremely helpful toward caring for their families.
- Job security: Many state employees recognize the relatively high stability of their jobs and suggest that stability allows them to be a dependable caregiver to the rest of their family.

*“(State workers) have a pretty secure job but the private sector out there isn’t secure. I have friends who had jobs for 12, 15 years, were laid off and now they can only be hired... as temps and their jobs may last three months, six months, nine months. If they’re lucky, a year! Then they’re laid off again because the big companies don’t want to deal with the benefits and permanent employees.” (Rank & File)*

- Benefits Package: While some participants suggest improvements for the benefits package that they receive, most employees conclude that, overall, the level of benefits that they and their family receive is a positive aspect of their jobs. Medical care is often raised as the most important benefit that employees receive regarding their ability to care for their family.
- Adequate compensation: While financial compensation is not raised as a major issue in any of the discussion groups, when it is addressed, it is clear that state employees are relatively positive on their salaries and suggest that their compensation helps them care for their family.

### ***Negative Aspects of Job towards Caring for a Family***

In contrast, many participants identify a much different set of work conditions that lead them to conclude that their jobs do not work well in caring for a family:

- Lack of understanding and compassionate management: Many of those state employees who are most negative on their jobs’ family-friendliness suggest that the primary reason for this opinion is non-supportive, direct management who does not recognize or value their role as a family care-giver.

*“I think employers sometimes forget that they are human beings... for eight years, I had an employer who... had children but she evidently never had a child with a toothache, never had a child that stubbed their toe and had to be picked up from school... never had her husband fall at work and break his back. She was just one of those people that, ‘Look, I’ve never had a problem with this. Why should you?’ That was difficult!” (Rank & File)*

*"(Managers) don't take into consideration that some of these girls here have kids. We have one girl that if she doesn't pick her kids up at 6:00 then they start charging her quite a bit at daycare. It's not just like a dollar an hour. It's like \$10, \$15, I believe. And the department doesn't see that." (Rank & File)*

*"If (managers) have no compassion, no conception of what it's like to have a family, it's really hard to talk to them." (Rank & File)*

*"Like I said, I have issues with my daughter, she was born with (the blood disease). I had just gotten a promotion and I got pregnant and I had complications. I went back (to work) and then I find out my daughter has this. So it's nothing I planned, but for (my managers) it was like, 'Well, you need to be here.' Then my evaluations were pretty bad, although I had justification that, 'hey, I am not abusing the time just because I wanted to be at home.' I had doctor's notes, everything, you name it. Yet, my evaluations were going downhill..." (Rank & File)*

- Rigid and unyielding work schedule: Many of those state employees most negative on their jobs' family-friendliness report that they are locked into rigid schedules that do not allow rescheduling work hours so that family needs can be met.

*"I just made the statement two weeks ago that we in CDC don't work for a family friendly – it's not a family friendly environment. My son has been very involved in 4H. He's raising an animal. I needed a day off because they had a show. I put in a memo and said I need this time off. They just passed something, I think it was last year, that we can take time off to be involved with our kids' things. Well, I put in the memo to do that and I was denied. I put in another memo and I was denied again. I went to my union rep and said, hey, what's up with this? They said it's wrong, they can't deny you. Well, in the end, I didn't get to attend. I had my direct supervisor let me out of work four hours early, so I got to see the second half but I missed him getting first place buckle over the whole show." (Rank & File)*

- Some participants suggest that this rigid managerial approach to job scheduling ends up decreasing workplace productivity because employees evade the rules so that they can take off work for these family needs.

*"I needed to go to my kid's (activity). I knew they wouldn't give me the time off so I called in sick... So you don't ask for it in advance, you call in sick, which in our case requires that they hire someone on overtime to fill that position. So when anybody calls in sick, then it costs time-and-a-half to fill in behind them... if you can plan it ahead of time and schedule people so you're not having that huge, expensive overtime, then you can cope with this. But when people feel that they're going to get turned down when they ask for the time off...they're not going to (ask)." (Rank & File)*

- Bureaucratic system regarding family oriented policies: Many employees, even those positive on their jobs' supportiveness of their families, suggest that they must navigate a confusing, circuitous process to utilize many of the policies, rights and privileges regarding family that they are offered. As a result, several employees suggest that while positive policies may exist, they are hard to actually use because of this process.

*"There's such a chain of command. If you bounce above it, I mean you really get smacked for it. If you try to think for yourself and you try to figure something out, or if you have a problem that you've discussed with supervision and then it goes to the district manager and gets bounced up a little higher, you get burned." (Rank & File)*

- Inability to communicate with family members during work hours: Several employees who are not allowed to maintain phone contact with their families during the day suggest that this workplace condition makes it more difficult to be care-provider for their family.
- Undesirable work schedules: Some participants who work “swing” or “graveyard” shifts identify several challenges that these schedules present to their role as family caretaker, such as limited daycare options available during those hours.
- Travel: Some State employees who must travel for their jobs suggest that this aspect of their employment diminishes their ability to care for their family.

### ***Changes in the Workplace Regarding Work & Family***

State employees do not express a clear opinion regarding whether their job environment has generally improved or worsened in the last several years. Any perceived change refers more to a change in an individual’s workplace or personal situation rather than a change in overall work environment. For example, many report that their own particular job has either improved or worsened with a change in direct management. Also, several participants say that their job has become either easier or more difficult as they have transitioned into new life stages, such as having children or, conversely, having children “grow-up” and leave the house.

It should be noted that a limited, but significant collection of employees, do suggest that the overall job environment has improved as a result of: 1) the relatively recent introduction of family-oriented policies such as FMLA; and 2) the change in gubernatorial leadership and more supportive approach taken by the current Davis administration.

*“(Rating the supportiveness of) the State of California, it’s a dual thing for me. I would say that under the previous (gubernatorial) administration, it would be probably a minus 10. Under the current administration, I am hoping that it will come up, I would love it to come up to a 10. I see it coming up... under the old administration every department got cut back so bad and some were really targeted.. and I see this administration, this new administration, focusing on bringing a lot of the departments up to level.” **“up to level” what?** (Rank & File)*

### III. Employer Policy toward Families

---

State employees have a range of associations regarding who or what comprises their “employer.” About a third of participants in the discussion groups suggest that they associate their immediate management as their employer, while another third consider the State of California their employer, and another third consider the State agency for which they work to be their employer. It should be noted that those most likely to associate their agency as their employer tend to be those who work for agencies with distinct cultures or identities.

Due to these differing perceptions regarding the identity of participants’ employer, individuals were asked what they felt about the supportiveness and family-friendliness of 1) their direct management and 2) State government.

#### ***Supportiveness of Direct Management***

As noted in the previous section, participants suggest that the most important variable that defines their workplace’s family friendliness is the overall attitude or approach that managers take toward their employees. While some participants explain that their managers understand the stress that employees carry regarding their family and allow for family needs to be met, others suggest that their management ignores the needs of family and thinks about their employees in a vacuum.

*“To be honest, (it comes down to) management sometimes. All of us rate our different immediate supervisors-- some of us rated them low, some of us rated them high. It’s all in their style, basically their personality. Some are just black-and-white, some have a little more flexibility. (Rank & File)*

*“I have known employees that have worked faithfully... for the State of 23 years. Well, now they’re at the stage where their parents are aging and they need to take the time off for their parents. It depends on who your supervisor is... One supervisor may grant them the time off to go to the doctor, if a parent becomes ill, has gone to the hospital... But you get another supervisor that is a bitch. She would use that (against the employee). I’ve seen it happen. They would use that to just drive that person insane. Like an aging parent isn’t enough stress, here you have a supervisor that will write them up for being gone too much!” (Rank & File)*

In particular, employees critical of their management’s approach to work and family identify a culture of distrust among management toward their employees. These individuals express frustration at a workplace environment in which managers and supervisors discourage employees from utilizing the rights and privileges to which they are entitled.

*“They make it easier to take sick time and then they blame us for taking it!” (Rank & File)*

In contrast, those employees who work in a flexible, supportive environment not only report that they are more satisfied with their job but also say that they are willing to work harder and “give more” since they are treated well.

*“When you feel good about what you're doing and where you work and the receptiveness of the people you work with, those parameters you don't mind exceeding. ‘Sure, let me help you do that.’ It makes you feel good about what you're doing.” (Rank & File)*

While employees are adamant that managers should operate without widespread fear and intimidation, group participants are clear that managers should root out the “bad apples”—those employees that often ruin it for everyone else.

*“I've been with CalTrans for 25 years on the road and in this building. I have seen people just blatantly take advantage of their job, the state, the money. It makes me sick, absolutely makes me sick. I wish they'd do something about it.” (Rank & File)*

## **Supportiveness of the State Government as an Employer**

In regard to the State of California as an employer, participants are generally mixed about the supportiveness and family-friendliness of the State government. Most participants are positive toward the variety of family-oriented programs that are offered by the State. However, many participants report that it is often difficult to access these programs due to bureaucratic “red-tape.” Furthermore, many employees in relatively isolated areas suggest that while many of these programs are available in Sacramento and the metropolitan areas, such programs are not available in their areas. Also, some employees note that programs may be available in some agencies and not in others.

State employees identify several existing programs that they consider supportive to their family-oriented needs:

- **Family Medical Leave Act:** Although most participants have not utilized this policy, it is often mentioned as an extremely positive development towards making the workplace more family-friendly and the State a more supportive employer.

*“One thing that's helped me, because my son is autistic, I was able to use family medical leave. I'm using it one day a week where I get to spend another day at home and helping my son, and that helped me. For the last 10 years since I started having children I've been asking to do a job share or comp time. I've been told, no, no, no, I can never do it and they won't advertise any part-time positions. So, I was just really totally stuck working full-time until the family medical leave, I found out I could use that.” (Rank & File)*

- **Telecommuting:** Employees that are offered the option to telecommute suggest that it has greatly enhanced their capacity to care for their families.

- Time off for family emergencies: State employees that are given time-off for family emergencies report that this is critical to their ability to be responsible caretakers of their family.
- Education leave: Employees in some agencies spoke positively about the ability to take time away from work for job-related education and training. In some instances, employees spoke of obtaining leave to study for licensing examinations.
- Bring child to work day: Some employees enjoyed the option of being able to bring a child to work to learn what their mother or father does on the job. (Note that some mothers also stated they occasionally take a child to work in a child care emergency. While this was not discussed as a program, it was noted that most supervisors are understanding in the case of such an emergency.)
- Donation of time-off to others with catastrophic problems: State employees are overwhelmingly positive toward this program and feel that it has been helpful to the neediest of State employees.
- Employee Assistance Program: Some participants are very positive on this program and suggest it has been helpful, while other participants say that their experiences with the program suggest that it is not that supportive.

Group participants also list several aspects of working for the State of California that are non-supportive of their efforts to raise their families:

- Lack of awareness about programs and rights: Many participants suggest that their coworkers, and often they themselves, are unaware of programs and policies that exist to help them care for their families. Indeed, in many cases, participants educated one another regarding what resources were available from the State. Moreover, many participants suggest it is extremely difficult to learn more about family-oriented offerings.
- Expense and lack of assistance regarding childcare: Many employees suggest that the State has not addressed the challenges and needs surrounding childcare, which has become more expensive and complex in the last several years.
- Prohibitions from job sharing or part-time scheduling: Many State employees would like to lessen the hours that they work in order to allow more time for their families, but say that they are prohibited from doing so by restrictive State limitations on part-time employment. Several employees stated that they would like to work a 20-hour week or a 30-hour week, with commensurate pay, as long as they maintained their benefits. Nearly all felt that this arrangement was not an option.
- Lack of staffing: Some employees suggest that a current lack of personnel in their workplace creates a level of demand on them that increases the workload and

stress factor of their jobs and makes it difficult to adequately care for their families.

*“Unfortunately for me we’re a **department** of four but the reduction in force cut us to one. So on the classification of the person who is my backup, she can only do so much in so many hours because then they have to start paying her out of class.” (Rank & File)*

## ***Evaluation of Specific Programs and Policies***

About two-thirds of the way through each focus group, participants were asked to complete a one-page worksheet. This worksheet included 11 programs, rights or privileges that state employees currently receive or could receive in the future. Participants were asked to rate each of these items according to three criteria: 1) the importance of the program to them; 2) how supportive their employer is regarding the program and 3) if they have ever used the program before.

Two tables are presented on the next two pages that illustrate the findings of this worksheet. The first table reviews the results for each item, while the second table ranks the items by importance, employer supportiveness and usage.

Before evaluating the tables, it is important to understand that the quantitative data collected in the 18 focus groups are not statistically significant. These data are not captured from a statistically valid sample of California State employees, but rather a limited group of State employees. While qualitative research in the form of focus groups, which is inherently inductive and exploratory, is acceptable with a small amount of participants, quantitative research, which draws precise conclusions about the percentages of large groups of people, is not. As a result, the figures contained in the following tables should be considered as anecdotal information regarding opinions and experiences with policies and programs, and not the “hard-and-fast” data regarding the tendencies of State employees.

<b>Program, Right or Privledge</b>		<b>Rank &amp; File Employees</b>	<b>Supervisors/ Managers</b>
<b>Time-off for family member illness</b>	Importance Support Usage	9.4 7.8 84%	9.7 8.9 88%
<b>Time-off for dependents' routine medical appointments</b>	Importance Support Usage	8.8 7.5 62%	8.0 8.6 80%
<b>Time-off for children's school-related activities</b>	Importance Support Usage	8.2 6.5 45%	8.3 7.0 63%
<b>Family Medical Leave Act</b>	Importance Support Usage	8.8 7.5 18%	7.4 9.5 10%
<b>Flexibility in setting work hours</b>	Importance Support Usage	9.2 6.3 65%	9.1 6.8 80%
<b>Telecommuting</b>	Importance Support Usage	5.5 2.8 10%	5.7 4.1 30%
<b>Job-related Education</b>	Importance Support Usage	9.0 6.4 66%	8.8 7.2 70%
<b>Assistance in choosing affordable, quality child or elder care</b>	Importance Support Usage	7.7 2.3 9%	7.7 2.2 13%
<b>Assistance with dependent care expenses</b>	Importance Support Usage	8.0 1.8 3%	6.7 1.5 5%
<b>Holiday/summer vacation programs for school aged children</b>	Importance Support Usage	6.9 3.0 7%	6.5 2.1 10%
<b>Parent education, including seminars, workshops, and newsletters</b>	Importance Support Usage	7.2 3.3 18%	6.2 3.1 10%





## Ranking Programs, Rights & Privileges by Importance, Employer's Supportiveness and Usage

### ***Ranked by Importance***

	Rank & File		Superv./ Mngrs.
Time-off for fam. Illness	9.4	Time-off for fam. Illness	9.7
Flexible work hours	9.2	Flexible work hours	9.1
Job related education	9.0	Job related education	8.8
Fam. Medical Leave Act	8.8	Time-off for children's activ.	8.3
Time-off for med. appt's.	8.8	Time-off for med. appt's.	8.0
Time-off for children's activ.	8.2	Help choosing child/eld. care	7.7
Assist. w/ depend. care	8.0	Fam. Medical Leave Act	7.4
Help choosing child/eld. care	7.7	Assist. w/ depend. care	6.7
Parent education	7.2	Summer children's progr.	6.5
Summer children's progr.	6.9	Parent education	6.2
Telecommuting	5.5	Telecommuting	5.7

### ***Ranked by Support level***

	Rank & File		Supervisors/ Managers
Time-off for fam. Illness	7.8	Time-off for children's activ.	9.5
Fam. Medical Leave Act	7.5	Time-off for fam. Illness	8.9
Time-off for med. appt's.	7.5	Fam. Medical Leave Act	8.6
Time-off for children's activ.	6.5	Parent education	7.2
Job related education	6.4	Time-off for med. appt's.	7.0
Flexible work hours	6.3	Job related education	6.8
Parent education	3.3	Flexible work hours	4.1
Summer children's progr.	3.0	Assist. w/ depend. care	3.1
Telecommuting	2.8	Summer children's progr.	2.2
Help choosing child/eld. care	2.3	Help choosing child/eld. care	2.1
Assist. w/ depend. care	1.8	Telecommuting	1.5

### ***Ranked by Usage***

	Rank & File		Supervisors/ Managers
Time-off for fam. Illness	84%	Time-off for fam. Illness	88%
Job related education	66%	Time-off for med. appt's.	80%
Flexible work hours	65%	Flexible work hours	80%
Time-off for med. appt's.	62%	Job related education	70%
Time-off for children's activ.	45%	Time-off for children's activ.	63%
Parent education	18%	Telecommuting	30%
Fam. Medical Leave Act	18%	Help choosing child/eld. care	13%
Telecommuting	10%	Fam. Medical Leave Act	10%
Help choosing child/eld. care	9%	Summer children's progr.	10%
Summer children's progr.	7%	Parent education	10%
Assist. w/ depend. care	3%	Assist. w/ depend. care	5%

After these worksheets were discussed, participants were asked about potential barriers towards utilizing such programs in their workplace. Overall, group participants suggest that while some or most of these programs are offered in their workplace, several barriers exist to using these programs. Barriers identified by participants included:

- Lack of awareness about these programs: As noted earlier in this section, participants suggest that many employees simply have no idea about the existence of these programs. Furthermore, many suggest that managers either do not know about the programs themselves or choose to share information with employees.

*"I should have been told about Family Medical Leave five or six years ago. Management never spoke a word to me even though I asked them time after time to work part-time. I had these children that have special needs. They never gave me any help." (Rank & File)*

- Non-supportive management regarding utilizing programs: Some participants suggest that although family-friendly policies are in place, the culture of their workplace discourages utilizing such policies. Many say that they minimize use of various programs because they feel implicit guilt generated by management questioning their ethics and motives regarding use of these policies.

*"They put you in a position like you're too scared to ask... we have a personnel clerk and I went up to her and said my husband is going to need an operation. 'I'm telling you this in confidence. If I had to take time off, what do you think their reaction would be?' I kind of almost have to hide. You have to kind of almost get the feel of it, what their reaction is, sit back and wait. What they going to do?" (Rank & File)*

*"Basically it's supposed to be, we don't get overtime but if you have to work over, you work over, and when you've got some free time in your schedule you're supposed to be able to leave. But what happens is you work over but you're not allowed to leave because you have to get approval." (Rank & File)*

## ***Suggested Improvements Regarding Work & Family***

Regarding their particular workplace and the State of California as an employer, participants provide several suggestions for improving their job regarding their families.

- Increase management training: One of the major suggestions to improve the family-friendliness of the State as an employer is to cultivate better management. A broad range of individuals in several groups suggested that: 1) the State should ensure that all personnel who are managers or supervisors actually have strong management skills; and 2) that managers should be trained to better understand employees' family needs.

*"I think (it's critical) to get supervisors that have people skills, not necessarily those that test the best and know the answers to all the questions, but focusing on getting management that have people skills who can deal with their staff." (Riverside)*

*"...about management: I think it's not only just education but screening, because some people aren't capable of management and supervision. Also, I know some people are excellent with supervision and management... but aren't as computer literate as others and they feel really inadequate because of it. There's an imbalance there." (Rank & File)*

- Change the workplace culture towards more acceptance of family needs. Many participants suggest that the current environment regarding work and family, which involves an implicit pressure from management that discourages use of family-friendly programs, must change to a more open and accepting climate of utilizing such programs.

*"Remove the punitive effects, having to take advantage of your sick leave and these other things that you've worked to acquire." (Rank & File)*

- Greater flexibility in scheduling: A large portion of participants are adamant in their recommendation for more flexible scheduling. These individuals suggested that, while they want to maintain maximum productivity and "do the work," in many cases they can be as or more effective in alternative job schedules (such as 4/40 or 9/80). Many suggest that these schedules would allow them to better care for family so that when they do come to work they are focused and without distraction.
- Increased job sharing and part-time options: Many employees would like to have the option of working part-time while maintaining their benefits package that they currently receive. These individuals suggest that such a schedule would better allow them to care for their family members.
- Develop a clearer, more comprehensive orientation process with State employees so new employees are aware of policies and programs that they can utilize regarding their families. Also, for existing employees, provide ongoing information about family-friendly programs and policies as they are introduced and/or modified.

*"Oh, I haven't been told anything (by the State)... my wife still calls trying to find out about insurance coverage and stuff like that. I'm not impressed with the State... just about anywhere you go, unless you work in a factory or something, there's some kind of an orientation. At least you're thinking about what they're saying so at least you know where to go. Here, none." (Rank & File)*

- One specific suggestion offered in one of the first discussion groups that received consistent support in subsequent groups is to create a packet or guidebook that lists and explains family-oriented policies, rights and privileges that State employees are offered. Employees are vehement in suggesting that this information be provided in straightforward terms that are easy to understand.

- Increase staffing to decrease stress and workload: Some State employees simply desire more employees in order to spread out their workload, which they feel would enhance their ability to care for their families. One specific suggestion that grew from this discussion was to have an on-call substitute workforce for clerical and basic jobs that could spell regular employees when they needed time off for family affairs.

*"I'd like to see a large pool of employees that would come in and take over when we do have to take off because I think that would help gain more flexibility. I think a lot of it's because they don't have enough staff. If I'm not a work, there's no one to take my place. My work builds up, builds up. And it causes hard feelings with other coworkers and managers don't know what to do because they have no one to replace you. So my (wish) would be the state to just have almost an endless supply of people." (Rank & File)*

- Ability to donate sick and vacation time to a miscellaneous pool for use by other employees. While many respondents spoke positively of the ability to donate sick time to others, they also suggested the ability to donate sick time and vacation time to a miscellaneous pool that can be used not only for sick time, but also for other family events. Some suggested that the program now in place for catastrophic leave should be amended to allow some workers with non-catastrophic family obligations to take advantage of the generosity of other workers.
- Allotment of paid general family leave: Several employees in many of the groups suggest that the creation of several hours each year of paid leave for family oriented events. Many envision this leave as the type that could allow employees to attend important family events without the hassle and threat of asking for approval for this time off.

*"I think... maybe the state should look at perhaps - you know how we have vacation time, sick time - proposing paid leave, family leave, as a benefit. In other words, it would be for example 20 hours a year paid. Go take care of whatever you need to take care of. Or 30, whatever it is, if you want to negotiate. But make it family leave paid, not family leave unpaid." (Rank & File)*

- Increase allotment of bereavement leave: Those aware of the allowance for bereavement leave suggest that it is woefully inadequate to meet the needs of employees who have family members who have died. These individuals suggest that the allowance should be sizably increased. Many specifically noted that bereavement leave is insufficient when one has to travel lengthy distances for a funeral.
- Introduce some type of crisis leave: Some employees also suggest that the State should offer some type of longer-term crisis leave for employees who are facing dire situations.

*"Well, it would be nice to have some kind of a crisis leave because we have three days a year bereavement. You've got to wait for them to die. Excuse me! ... 10 years ago I had a best friend who was dying of cancer and I went in and told my boss I'm going to the hospital and I may*

*be there a week and I may be there two months and you're going to see me when you see me. Well, I could have gotten in a lot of trouble if I had not had the boss I had. And as it ended up, it was my two weeks of vacation that year to be with my friend. She died. I think some sort of crisis thing would be really good because... when your entire life is work and family issues and you don't get a chance to get away from those issues, even with the three or four days break, it's going to affect you." (Rank & File)*

Overall, many participants suggest that the State government must play a significant leadership in making the workplace more family-friendly. While employees clearly suggest that family-friendly improvements can be made regarding their own workplace and particular management, many feel State leaders must take the initiative to make the workplace more family-friendly. These individuals feel that a certain level of momentum must be generated from the top-down in order to achieve significant, lasting improvements.

*"It seems like (State government leaders) are the ones that are really setting the ground rules for all of our different operations that are occurring. So, the same thing that I want my place to be able to do, it needs to come down from Sacramento and DDS that "This is approved, we are supporting this, we're going to work with people to have flexible work schedules." But it's going to have to come down from headquarters. Our place is not going to do it until they get the okay from up there... We need Sacramento to start taking action and looking at this. (Rank & File)*

## IV. Benefits Package

---

State employees, overall, feel relatively positive on the benefits that they currently receive from their State employment. Health care is clearly considered the most important benefit within this package, followed by retirement. Dental is also frequently mentioned as an important health benefit.

No single benefit emerges as relatively unimportant with State employees. Generally speaking, employees say that all of their benefits are important to them and they would not want to lose the opportunity to access any of these.

Participants do identify several potential improvements to the benefits that they receive.

- First of all, many individuals want the cost of medical co-payments lowered.

*"It does seem to me, though, that if you want a good medical plan you have to take quite a bit in copayments and deductibles. I switched from HealthNet to a more expensive plan because I wanted that choice of doctor's but it costs you dearly. So, you can have a marginal medical plan and not pay much of anything but then you get marginal health care." (Rank & File)*

- Also, many individuals are very concerned with the current negotiations that may result in higher medical premiums.
- Some employees mention their desire for life insurance or long-term disability insurance.
- Some employees desire including their parents on their medical plans, even if they do not live with these individuals.

*"I would like to be able to have my health insurance cover my mother, who lives with me. Right now, I was told that they don't have such a thing. And she has to pay \$240 and if she loses her job, then that money is coming out of my pocket because I don't think she should not have health insurance. The most important thing is for me in our family unit is that she has health insurance. She's the one that needs it the most." (Rank & File)*

- Some participants feel that the State could give a better explanation of benefits.

*"I think (the State) could make it easier for you to get into the program we contribute. I know I've asked about it and was told to go to this Web site and I don't understand why personnel just can't give me something. Why do I have to go and search it out on a Web site? (Rank & File)*

- It should be noted that employees in the less urbanized areas of the State, such as Redding, Crescent City and Monterey, say that their medical plans that they receive from the State does not offer adequate choice regarding medical care. While they concede that this shortcoming is in part due to a lack of facilities in their area, they still suggest the State should look into expanding choices within their medical benefits.

*"The only thing I can see as a downside of the benefits we get up here is because we're in the north state we don't get as good of stuff as people in the city. They've got better plans down there... The plans are just a better package deal than they are in the rural areas. But they seem to be trying to help a little bit of that." (Rank & File)*

*In a larger city, you get an HMO, I mean it is very pricey here in a remote area, a community that doesn't offer those kind of things. Plus your insurance company doesn't pay... We just don't have a choice, is what it comes down. We don't have a choice. We have a choice of two companies and one is so outrageously expensive it would be foolish for anyone to choose it. The other one, while a little less expensive there's still large copays, large deductibles, a lot of out-of-pocket expenses...I hear people complain that they're doing the exact same job here as they're doing down at San Quentin or another institution and yet they can walk into a doctor's office or hospital and pay next to nothing, and we're putting out all of this money and not getting anything in return." (Rank & File)*



## V. Care for Dependent Family Members

---

Care for dependent family members arises as an issue of importance long before it is addressed specifically towards the end of each focus group. Employees who are parents of children or children of elderly parents report that this issue materializes as a major challenge in their day-to-day lives. Even those participants who do not provide care for dependents know the challenges that surround the issue from coworkers who are struggling to meet these challenges.

*"I have some coworkers that have small children and it's been really difficult for them. Say something has come up and they need to be with their children. They've really had a difficult time getting time off to meet these needs of their children, or say the babysitter just gets sick and can't show up that day and then you have to find alternative childcare and that's really hard. You have somebody that you depend on all the time and then all of a sudden they're not there."* (Rank & File)

Participants report that State employees currently utilize a range of options regarding care for dependent family members. Many employees who are fortunate enough to have available family members living nearby often use one of these family members to care for their dependents while they are working. Others who are not so fortunate must purchase private care for their dependents, often which is very expensive.

*"For people in our office, its daycare centers and in-home kind of nanny situations. Some people have their parents in town so they drop their kids off with the mom. There's a whole variety of (situations)." (Rank & File)*

*"It works pretty well for my younger son but sometimes the tutor gets sick or wants to do something and so it's hard to find somebody to cover. It's expensive... and you feel like sometimes you're shortchanging your children because you're not there enough with them. And they begin to associate other people as being their mothers." (Rank & File)*

State employees identify several ways that the State could be more supportive regarding care for dependent family members:

- On-site or near site daycare: Many employees suggest that the ability to bring their children to daycare at or near the worksite would greatly ease their daily schedule and also provide a place where they are accessible to their children in case of emergency. Many individuals are also attracted to this option because they assume that since it is at a State facility, it would be of high quality and relatively affordable.

*"...it doesn't really affect me, but if I can think of anything that they need, they need onsite daycare. Good, reasonable daycare. I had a friend that worked for Social Services and the daycare that's out there is scary, very scary, because you don't know who is taking care of your children. If it was onsite or at least at a site that was close enough to work that you could get to if necessary, I think that would be real, real important. I think that's one of the best things they could do for the state employees." (Rank & File)*

- Salary subsidy for daycare: Many employees also suggest that it would be extremely helpful to provide a monetary subsidy to employees for care for dependent family members. Many of the participants suggest that such a subsidy should be adjusted to an employee's income so that lower paid workers be provided a higher subsidy for daycare.
- Resource guides for care options: An idea that emerged as overwhelmingly popular is the suggestion of resource guides that list safe, high-quality options regarding care for dependent family members (both children and elderly).

*"My mother-in-law had an aneurysm 24 years ago and she's been paralyzed for the last 24 years. We had to finally put her into a nursing home a year and half ago. So we've been shifting responsibility for years. And we didn't know where to go... it was word of mouth. It was other people at work who had gotten in similar situations that helped us learn. We didn't have anyone we could turn to, to ask some of the questions... When we finally did take her to the hospital it had to be paramedics. Some kind of education about (choices) would be helpful." (Rank & File)*

## VI. Differences between Rank & File and Managers & Supervisors

---

In most cases, supervisors and managers have the same issues and concerns of the rank and file respondents: they desire more flexibility in scheduling, the availability of quality, affordable child care and the ability to take off from work to deal with family matters when needed. However, a handful of issues do arise that are stressed more strenuously in the focus groups comprised of managers and supervisors.

### **Staffing**

Managers express strong concerns about the challenges faced by remaining staff when an employee takes time off to deal with family matters. Moreover, it is clear that managers are faced with the unenviable task of considering important time off requests in the context of ensuring that the necessary workload is completed

*"The kid's sick, the employee is not here, now I am burdened. The employee's job is spread among the remaining troops. Urgent details are delegated to those already overloaded."*  
(Manager)

*"There is a struggle for managers to meet operational needs. People want Christmas week off, but they are not senior enough, they can't trade, they can't find anyone to cover. Some events come only once in life, it's inexcusable for people to miss these events due to operational need. (People are saying to their children:) 'I can't watch you graduate because I have a meal to serve.' It's wrenching."* (Manager)

Also regarding the issue of staffing, some managers suggest that the current conditions of understaffing that are faced in their workplace creates a disincentive for managers to allow workers time off for family issues.

*"Short staffing does not support family or individual needs for time off."* (Manager)

Many managers state much of their workday is comprised of managing and coordinating schedules to ensure that an adequate staff level is maintained when employees take time off.

Suggestions on how address the challenges of staffing in a family-friendly workplace revolve around the design of an intermittent work force, or a sort of in-house temporary employment group. One specific suggestion is that State could develop a list of available workers in the community who could be called on to do last-minute substitute work in a department in order to provide a permanent employee the ability to deal with family emergencies without burdening the remaining staff.

*"I would like to see a permanent intermittent employee, that is like a temporary job service for auxiliary staff. Get those from the community to help." (Manager)*

Not all managers feel that the State should provide at least the level of time off that it currently provides to its employees for family-oriented issues. In one group, a debate occurred among managers about the degree to which managers needed to satisfy the family needs of their staff. Specifically, some managers feel that the State already goes too far in granting time off for non-emergencies.

*"I grew up with job first, family second. I'm surprised to see how much time off the state gives." (Manager)*

However, other managers point out that the challenges that working parents face today are far different than a generation ago and that managers need to work with their staff to balance an individual's work and family needs.

Some managers bemoan the fact that they frequently lose good employees due to maternity leave. While many view current policies regarding maternity leave very positively (with special mention for allowing fathers of new babies time to stay home), some feel more flexibility is necessary regarding these policies.

*"Many full-time employees don't come back after maternity leave. They want to come back part-time to spend time with their new child, but still maintain their benefits. They should be allowed to come back part-time." (Manager)*

## ***Abuse of Family-friendly Policies***

Some supervisors and managers identify the difficulty of dealing with employees who are known to abuse family-oriented policies, such as the ability to take time off to tend to family issues. While some managers say that such employees are detectable and can be disciplined on an individual basis, other managers, particularly those in large departments, say it is not always so easy to determine a legitimate request for family oriented time-off from a fraudulent request.

Some managers suggest that strong individualized communication can address the issues of taking time-off for family matters.

*"I went to her and said, 'Let me support you' early in the week to get her to anticipate her schedule and her needs. It caused her to pay more attention to her work hours." (Manager)*

Others complained that it is incumbent on managers and supervisors to treat all staff consistently with regard to employees' time off and the problems that can develop when employees sense that certain other employees are receiving preferential treatment. Some say that that concern causes them to be rigid in allowing time off.

*"Single mothers get away with something others don't. It creates conflict among staff. Full*

*days are not being put in and other employees want action.” (Manager)*

## **Suggested Culture Shift**

Many managers note that family-friendly policies are already in place, but are not utilized because of the current work climate. These participants feel that an effort needs to be made by both themselves and the state hierarchy to initiate a “culture shift” that supports and encourages employees taking time off for family matters.

Many managers suggest that currently, a bias exists against rank and file employees who take time off, which often emanates either from managers or coworkers. Some managers note that coworkers react negatively to an employee who leaves to spend time with a child and are resentful of what they consider an excessive workload caused in part by the absent worker.

Others express concern that management examines an employee’s attendance record when considering candidates for promotion, and that an employee who takes time away from work for family matters is viewed negatively in this evaluation.

*“If I have a family member in the hospital and I want to be there, I charge it to sick leave. But when I use sick time, I feel guilty all day long. I don’t feel comfortable to stay home with a sick kid. It stays in my thoughts all day long. I don’t feel welcome to stay home, so I don’t feel I have the support (from my employer).” (Manager)*

*“The policy is there, the good will is there, but the culture isn’t geared toward balancing work and family. We talk the talk but we don’t walk the walk.” **Why no reference to focus group location?” (Manager)***

Some managers suggest that the current workplace culture that discourages use of family-friendly programs and policies can be partially remedied by a change of tone and attitude among managers.

*“I always tell my staff ... ‘First, take care of yourself. Second, take care of your family. Then, take care of your job.’ ” (Manager)*

Participants in the managers’ focus groups suggest that their ability to grant time off for their staff has resulted in higher workplace productivity.

*"I have never yet denied anyone a request for time off. And my department has the lowest level of sick time. They are not calling in sick, because they receive time off when they need it... You need to be cognizant of staff's needs to deal with kids. I get quick requests to leave work to see a child. I accommodate. A happy employee is a good employee. I encourage any swap that will allow the staff to do their job, and still be flexible so they can watch their kids play baseball and receive awards."* **(Manager)**

Other suggestions for changing this culture revolve around finances. One specific suggestion regarding the budget is to have a budgetary line item that allows overtime money to be spent to cover for an employee who needs to miss work due to family issues.

It is important to note that some managers fear that family responsibilities may hurt them when applying for promotions. Additionally, some individuals who are managers feel that a promotion is often dependent on the ability to relocate. As a result, some complain that they have been forced to choose between a promotion and keeping their children in a comfortable school and social setting.

### ***Additional Suggestions for the Workplace***

Supervisors and managers also provide a variety of specific policy-oriented suggestions for creating a more family-friendly workplace and allowing staff more flexibility in taking time off for family issues. These suggestions include:

- Make all holidays floating holidays.
- Creating a climate where common courtesy is used toward a fellow worker
- Allow workers to take vacations when needed, outside the parameters of seniority.
- Allow workers to set vacation dates at different times during the work year, rather than holding them to vacation dates set twelve months in advance.
- Create a low-interest fund to borrow against in case of emergencies.
- Create a subsidized sliding scale for day care costs, and help with resources for parents or in-laws who live elsewhere.
- Prepare a pamphlet for all state employees that lists what programs are currently available for them to utilize when dealing with family issues.

## VII. The Connection between Work & Family

---

Virtually all State employees agree that work and family impact one another in both directions. As the majority of this report illustrates, employees clearly understand that their jobs impact their families—sometimes positively, sometimes negatively.

However, employees also realize that the needs and issues of their families greatly impact their jobs. In short, participants repeatedly argue that the obligations that an individual has towards his or her family does not stop and are not put on hold when that individual comes to work. If these obligations are not adequately addressed and managed in the workplace, employees argue that the productivity of the employee suffers.

*“We cannot sever ourselves from our family, be it a pager, cell phone, pay phone, company phone, whatever. Our kids have to be able to reach us. We have to be able to return phone calls in some manner. I don't care who it is, from the top to the bottom, it happens.” (Rank & File)*

*“I think a lot of (caring for a family) is emotionally draining. If you've got children, if you've got elderly parents, whatever, it's 24 hours a day... Hoping you're raising your children right, trying to make ends meet, looking after parents. Those are real issues and a lot of times they affect work.” (Rank & File)*

*“When you're worried about children or parents or the tutor hasn't shown up and what's going on, you're not being effective at your job, and I don't care if you're there giving service or sitting trying to write a report, you're just not being effective. Just being at the job should not be the expectation of any employer, just being there and putting in your time. There needs to be quality time, you need to be able to focus on.” (Rank & File)*

As a result, participants suggest that as the State considers the issues of work and family, it must recognize and develop policy recognizing that a person's role as an employee and a family member cannot be separated. State employees conclude that any increased support that the State provides to its employees in caring for their families will be returned in a more productive, functional workplace.